with the male element in the female element, sliding the ring of the meltable material guidingly directly against the one of the male and female elements to a second location at which no appreciable portion of the meltable material resides between radially facing portions of the male element and the female element;

B3

C3 Cont'd

with the meltable material at the second location, heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material and thereby causing the melted meltable material to flow between the male and female elements; and

cooling the male and female joint surfaces to solidify the meltable material between the male and female joint surfaces.

REMARKS

Applicant's undersigned attorney wishes to thank Examiner Edmondson for the courtesies extended him at the interview on July 25, 2002. At the interview, amendments to claims 1, 11 and 16, as presented herein, were discussed. It was pointed out to the Examiner that the three prior art references cited against the pending claims - U.S. Patent No. 5,450,666, to Conn et al; UK Patent Application No. 2092692; and UK Patent Application No. 2126298 all define a receptacle in the female element into which at least a part of the ring element is directed before it is melted. The Examiner agreed these amendments would overcome the prior art of record, as indicated in the Interview Summary Record.

Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 1-21 and allowance of the case are requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: July 29, 2002

MARKED UP VERSION OF AMENDMENTS

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (amended) A method of forming a meltable material at a joint between telescopingly engaged male and female elements, said method comprising the steps of:

directing the male element into the female element so that the male and female elements are telescopingly engaged and a radially facing joint surface on the female element surrounds a radially facing joint surface on the male element;

with the male and female elements telescopingly engaged, placing a ring of the meltable material around one of the male and female elements at a first location;

[heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material melts;]

sliding the ring of meltable material guidingly directly against the one of the male and female elements from the first location to a second location at which no appreciable portion of the meltable material resides between radially facing portions of the male element and the female element;

with the ring of meltable material at the second location and the male and female elements at the joint at a temperature at which the meltable material melts, heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material melts and thereby causing the meltable material to flow between the male and female joint surfaces; and

cooling the male and female elements at the joint to solidify the meltable material between the male and female joint surfaces.

11. (amended) A method of forming a meltable material at a joint between telescopingly engaged male and female elements, the female element having a free edge, said method comprising the steps of:

directing the male element into the female element so that the male and female elements are telescopingly engaged and a radially facing joint surface on the female element surrounds a radially facing joint surface on the male element;

with the male and female elements telescopingly engaged, placing a ring of the meltable material around the male element at a first location spaced from the free edge of the female element,

sliding the meltable material guidingly directly against the male element from the first location closer to the free edge of the female element to a second location at which [the ring of the meltable material is not fully within] no appreciable portion of the meltable material resides between radially facing portions of the male element and the female element;

with the meltable material at the second location, heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material melts[;] and thereby causing the melted meltable material to flow between the male and female elements; and

cooling the male and female elements at the joint to solidify the meltable material between the male and female joint surfaces.

16. (amended) A method of making a connection between male and female elements, said method comprising the steps of:

directing the male element into the female element so that the male and female elements are telescopingly engaged and a radially facing joint surface on the female element surrounds a radially facing joint surface on the male element;

providing a ring of meltable material;

with the male and female elements telescopingly engaged, directing one of the male and female elements through the ring of meltable material to a first location on the one of the male and female elements;

after directing the one of the male and female elements through the ring of meltable material, directing the male element into the female element so that the female joint surface surrounds the male joint surface;

with the male element in the female element, sliding the ring of the meltable material guidingly directly against the one of the male and female elements to a second location at which no appreciable portion of the meltable material resides between radially facing portions of the male element and the female element;

with the meltable material at the second location, heating the male and female elements at the joint to a temperature at which the meltable material melts[;] and thereby causing the melted meltable material to flow between the male and female elements; and

cooling the male and female joint surfaces to solidify the meltable material between the male and female joint surfaces.